different States and also that the cut-off year in Sikkim earlier than 1975 could not be, because the Chogyal's mountain Kingdom merged in India in that year; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Central team consisting of senior officers visited Gangtok in January, 1987 and discussed with the Chief Minister, Sikkim various aspects of the problem relating to 'stateless' citizens in Sikkim.

Import of capital and technology

810. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state·

(a) whether the former Union Cabinet Minister and a leading economist, Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, While inaugurating the 8th World Economist Congress in Delhi in December last had warned that the present indiscriminate import of capital and technology would adversely affect India's credit-rating and may also plunge India into "debt-trap"; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction and response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a) and (b) Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao's speech delivered at the 8th World Economist Congress on 1st December, 1986, referred to in the Question, includes the following passage:—

"Import of Capital has to be paid for, and mostly at market rates; and our long standing record of credit-rating and avoidance of the debt trap may soon come to an end with our planned efforts to speed up development. Imported technology carries with it. Its own unwelcome conditions and gives no chance for its indigenisation and subsequent domestic development. Our balance of payments is getting out of gear. Export induced investments and operations may themselves induce more inputs, creating a vicious circle of imports chasing exports, even assuming that our export drive, shorn of incentives at the expense of public revenues and domestic requirements, will take off the ground and not fall a victim to the lure of a profitable elitist domestic market."

The above passage does not say that there is indiscriminate import of capital and technology at present. The improved access to imported technology and capital goods and other inputs implicit in recent policy measures for exporters was to enable increased exports.

Loss of forest land

811. SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an area of more than 43 lakh hectares of forest land has been lost till date since 1952 and furthermore nearly 7 lakh hectares of forest land is under encroachment in various States and Union Territories; and

(b) if so, what are the details and consequences thereof?

TEH MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Details of forest land diverted for various developmental projects between 1952—1980, are as follows:—

Purpose	Area diverted (Lakh hectares)
Agriculture . . .	26·24
River Valley Projects .	5·02
Industries & Townships	1·34
Transmission lines, roads	0·60
Miscellaneous . .	10·08
TOTAL : .	43·28

Large scale diversion of forest lands to non- forest uses has brought us face to face with a major ecological and socio-economic crisis.

Remedial action has been taken through enactment of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to check indiscriminate diversion of forest lands to non-forest uses States/UTs have been advised to strengthen the enforcement machiery at the field level to take action against encroachers. National Wastelands Development Board has been set up with the object of bringing 5 million hectares of land every year under firewood and fodder plantations. This would also help restores the ecological balance.

Depletion of forests

812. SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present forest depletion rate is 1.5 million hectares, which may lead to zero forest in about 20 years and that in hill tracts in some States the present forest cover does not exceed 20 per cent against the desired 60 per cent;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to meet the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) and (b) According to the National Remote Sensing Agency the rate of forest depletion between 1972-75 and 1980-82 was 1.3 million hectares per year. It is true that forest cover in hill tracts in some of the States is less than 20 per cent against the optimum of 60 per cent envisaged in the National Forest Policy, 1952. However, a detailed survey has not been carried out.

(c) Guidelines have been issued to the State Governments

(i) to avoid clearfelling of natural forests and where such fellings are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations it should be restricted to areas not exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains.

(ii) to consider banning of fellings in the hills above 1000 metres, at least for some years.

(iii) to identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.

(iv) to set a part 4 per cent of the geographical area as protection areas like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserve etc.

National wastelands Development Board has been set up with the object of bringing 5 million hectares of land every year under fuelwood and fodder plantations.